

Identifying Barriers to Transfer

Key findings from focus group and survey data

The attached document summarizes key findings from focus groups and surveys conducted by CPE in attempt to identify barriers to student transfer in Kentucky.

Focus group results were collected from two sources: 1) a statewide meeting of financial aid, admissions and registration directors, and 2) four regional transfer meetings (Elizabethtown, Hazard, Maysville and Madisonville) attended by transfer advisors, faculty and administrators.

Survey data was collected through the Community and Technical College Student Survey. 4,985 community and technical college students completed the survey, which asked about their education goals, perceptions of barriers to degree attainment, and plans for transfer.

From this data collection effort, four key barriers to transfer have been identified:

- I. Financial barriers limit students' access to postsecondary education and transfer.
- II. Students' perceptions of the benefit of higher education is overshadowed by their desire for employment and stability.
- III. The delivery of academic services at the baccalaureate level can be a barrier to student transfer and degree attainment.
- IV. Student academic planning, preparation and knowledge about transfer can limit their understanding and success within the transfer process.

Focus group and survey data findings are provided to assist in identifying possible policy and/or program initiatives that can address these barriers to student transfer.

Identifying Barriers to Transfer:
Key findings from focus group and survey data

I. Financial barriers limit students' access to postsecondary education and transfer

Focus Group Findings:

- The cost of college is often a barrier in students' pursuit of postsecondary education.
- Financial aid structures inhibit mobility across postsecondary institutions (ex: KEES monies).
- Part-time and transfer student-specific financial aid is limited.
- Limited attention to transfer students in the development and distribution of scholarships.
- Students perceive the cost of college to be more than the benefit of a 4-year degree, especially in regional areas where there are limited job opportunities requiring a 4-year degree.

Survey Findings*:

- 55.7% of all students responding to the 2004 Community and Technical College Student Survey indicated that financial difficulties were a moderate or major problem (27.9% and 27.2% respectively) that have made going to college difficult. Breakdown by key student demographics:
 - 58.3% of female respondents and 49.7% of male respondents.
 - 58% of all minority respondents (includes black, non-Hispanic, Hispanic, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, and Other).
 - 42.8% of respondents under 19 years of age, 54% of respondents age 20-21, 63.4% of respondents age 22-24, 67.2% of respondents age 25-29, 65.3% of respondents age 30-39 and 57.2% of respondents age 40 and over.
- 50.7% of all students responding to the survey indicated that the cost of books and materials were a moderate or major problem (24.8.9% and 25.9% respectively) that have made going to college difficult.
- 47.2% of all students responding to the survey indicated that the cost of tuition is a moderate or major problem (22.5% and 24.7% respectively) that has made going to college difficult.
- 53.1% of the students responding to the survey indicated the majority of their college expenses are paid for by financial aid and loans. 16.4% indicated they were personally responsible for the majority of their college expenses. 13.3% indicated their parents paid for the majority of their college expenses.
- 11.7% of the 1,570 students not planning to transfer indicated cost as a factor in their decision.
- 42% of the 1,094 students who are undecided about transferring indicated that they would be more likely to transfer if scholarships were available for transfer students.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

- Should the state create financial aid programs targeting transfer?
- What policies would encourage universities to expand institutional aid for transfer students?

II. Students' perception of the benefit of higher education is overshadowed by their desire for employment and stability.

Focus Group Findings:

- A baccalaureate degree is often not needed for securing a job in one's hometown. Economic growth is seen in technical fields rather than occupations requiring 4-year degrees.
- College is an optional activity when compared to the need for employment.
- Students want to enter the workforce and the idea of getting another degree may seem too distant.
- The community/family culture does not promote education (especially among first generation college students).
- Uncertainty about leaving home and family.
- Age is often a factor in limiting the student's mobility after the community or technical college.

Survey Findings:

- 47.9% of students indicated they were taking college courses to upgrade their skills for career advancement. Only 7% of students indicated they were taking college courses because their employer requires it.
- 54.6% of the 1,570 students not planning to transfer indicated that they never planned to transfer – it was not their goal.
- 14.4% of the students not planning to transfer indicated that they do not believe a BA is important at this time.
- 19.3% of the students not planning to transfer indicated that they are not transferring because their job does not require that they have a baccalaureate degree.
- Students age 19 and younger were more likely to be planning to transfer, with 54.6% indicating they were planning to transfer immediately or in the near future. Older students were less likely to be planning to transfer (37.6% of students 30 to 39 and 28.7% of students over 40 (N=587).
- Students whose parents did not earn a bachelor's degree (N=3,611) were less likely to be planning to transfer. 34.3% of these students were not planning to transfer and 23.1% were undecided.
- Students taking courses in the fields of Manufacturing (50%), Retail and Service Industry (43.9%), Health Professions (37%) and Computer/Information Technologies (33.8%) had higher percentages of responses indicating they were not planning to transfer than those taking courses in other fields.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

What policies/programs would promote the creation of career pathways for KCTCS that more clearly tie transfer/baccalaureate degree attainment to valued employment outcomes?

What policies would encourage communities to invest in the promotion of transfer?

Would including a stronger transfer component in the new phase of the Go Higher Kentucky college access campaign increase student motivation to transfer?

III. The delivery of academic services at the baccalaureate level can be a barrier to student transfer and degree attainment.

Focus Group Findings:

- Course offerings (time, location, format) do not always accommodate the non-traditional or working student.
- Online course offerings are suitable to many students, but not all. Some students are not comfortable with online learning and are more traditional classroom learners.
- Degree programs offered by the universities on the community and technical college campus are often limited (education, technology), thereby limiting the students' options and oftentimes over saturating the local workforce.

Survey Findings:

- 37.8% of the students taking the survey indicated that the times course are scheduled make going to college more difficult for them (moderate or major problem).
 - Older students were more likely to indicate that the timing of courses was a moderate or major difficulty to going to college. 27.2% of respondents under 19 years of age, 37.5% of respondents age 20-21, 41.7% of respondents age 22-24, 48.5% of respondents age 25-29, 43.9% of respondents age 30-39 and 41.4% of respondents age 40 and over.
- 12.2% of the students taking the survey indicated that the availability of online courses made going to college more difficult for them.
- 32.8% of the 1,094 students who are undecided about transferring indicated that they would be more likely to transfer if coursework and degree programs were available online.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

- What policies/programs would encourage the expansion of baccalaureate offerings in targeted state need areas by universities on KCTCS or extended campuses?
- What policies/programs would encourage greater use of KYVU/KYVL and other distance learning formats to increase access to baccalaureate degree programs for place-bound students?

IV. Student academic planning, preparation and knowledge about transfer can limit their understanding and success within the transfer process.

Focus Group Findings:

- Students who have to take developmental education face initial barriers that make the idea of taking additional years of college coursework to complete the bachelor's degree distant and unreachable.
- Students do not always have a career plan in mind and subsequently do not plan for transfer. These students face difficulties when attempting to transfer coursework that does not fit a baccalaureate program or transfer agreement.
- Students need more focused advising at the 2-year institution – the current advising model (faculty, part-time, large case loads) does not work.
- Students are not aware of the transfer process.
- The transition from the 2- to 4-year institution is not always an easy or well-supported process. These students face additional barriers (fear, relocation, etc.) that need to be addressed at both the sending and receiving institutions.

Survey Findings:

- Of the 2,413 students who indicated their academic goal was to complete a BA/BS, MA, PhD or Professional Degree, 8.2% indicated they did not plan to transfer and 14.4% were undecided about transferring.
- Of the 2,320 students planning to transfer (soon or in near future) 63.6% felt they had enough information to be able to transfer to a university. 36.4% indicated they felt they did not have enough information.
- Students planning to transfer indicated they had received transfer information from:
 - 33.5% from their college counselor or advisor.
 - 32.8% had not received transfer information.
 - 7.1% from a university website.
 - 6.1% from a high school counselor/advisor.
 - 5.9% from a college admissions/registration office.
 - 5.8% from a parent.
 - 8.7% from various other sources
 - 1,094 students indicated they were undecided about transferring to a university. When asked about the information that would help them determine whether or not to transfer, their responses included the following (students could indicate multiple responses):
 - 42.1% identified more information on the transfer options that are available.
 - 40.8% identified financial aid information for transfer students.
 - 35.0% identified information on the benefits of a bachelor's degree.
 - 30.9% identified additional advice from their advisor.
 - 10.6% identified speaking with a university representative.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

- What policies/programs would reduce remediation at KCTCS campuses (e.g. increase the rigor of the KEES curriculum)?
- Would including a stronger transfer component in the new phase of the Go Higher Kentucky college access campaign increase student motivation to transfer?

- Would statewide implementation of the Course Applicability System (CAS) address these barriers? How is this best accomplished?

*Survey Numbers:

<u>Total Number of Students Responding to Survey:</u>		4,985
Female		3,370
Male		1,587
Missing Data		28
White, non-Hispanic		4,520
Black, non-Hispanic		269
Hispanic		43
American Indian/Alaskan Native		24
Asian/Pacific Islander		25
Other		67
Missing Data		37
Total Minority		428
19 and younger		1,460
20-21		918
22-24		572
25-29		617
30-39		813
40 and over		587
Missing Data		18
Planning to transfer		1,560
Planning to transfer – waiting to transfer		760
Not planning to transfer		1,570
Undecided		1,094
Missing Data		